

ANDREW J. BROWN ACADEMY

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT #2

DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE



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This supplemental report presents information about the school in three sections:

- Andrew J. Brown Academy's Students (enrollment and demographic information)
- Performance at Andrew J. Brown Academy
- Detailed Description of Andrew J. Brown Academy's Programs and Activities (as provided by the school)

2005



ANDREW J. BROWN ACADEMY

DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE

STUDENTS

Andrew J. Brown Academy

A

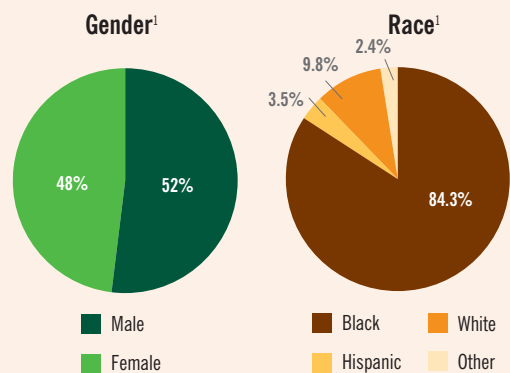
ENROLLMENT AND DEMAND

	2004-05	At Capacity
Grades served	K-6	K-8
Maximum possible enrollment, pursuant to charter	496	704
Number of students enrolled ¹	490	N/A
Number of students on waiting list ²	142	N/A

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: School self-report of data, as of August 1, 2005. ■ N/A denotes "Not Applicable." A school may elect to maintain a smaller overall enrollment than that allowed by its Charter with the Mayor's Office. Actual enrollment may exceed the maximum enrollment stated in the Charter by 10%. It is possible that a school may have a waiting list but not be fully enrolled because waiting list figures are aggregated across grades; some grades may be fully enrolled and have waiting lists while others do not.

B

STUDENT COMPOSITION



Andrew J. Brown Academy	
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch ¹	43.5%
Special Education ²	7.6%
Limited English Proficiency ³	0.0%

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Exceptional Learners, count reported December 2004. ■ ³Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Language and Minority Programs, count reported March 2005. ■ See main report for comparative data.

PERFORMANCE

The section below describes Andrew J. Brown Academy's (AJB) performance over its second school year by addressing the common performance indicators in the Mayor's Charter School Performance Framework. The complete Performance Framework may be viewed on-line at <http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/Accountability/2005/home.htm>.

In some areas, this section may also provide information about the school's performance in 2003-04 as compared to its performance in 2004-05. For additional information on how performance has changed, view the *2004 Accountability Report on Mayor-Sponsored Charter Schools*, also available on-line at the website listed above.

The Mayor's Office conducts evaluations of school performance using a variety of measurement tools, including visits by a multi-member site evaluation team, independent surveys of parents and staff, and expert analysis of standardized test score data. Each section of the following text notes the specific tools used. Supplemental Report 12 contains a complete description of evaluation mechanisms used to prepare this report.

IS THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

IS THE SCHOOL MAKING ADEQUATE YEARLY ACADEMIC PROGRESS, AS MEASURED BY THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

Performance on the statewide assessment

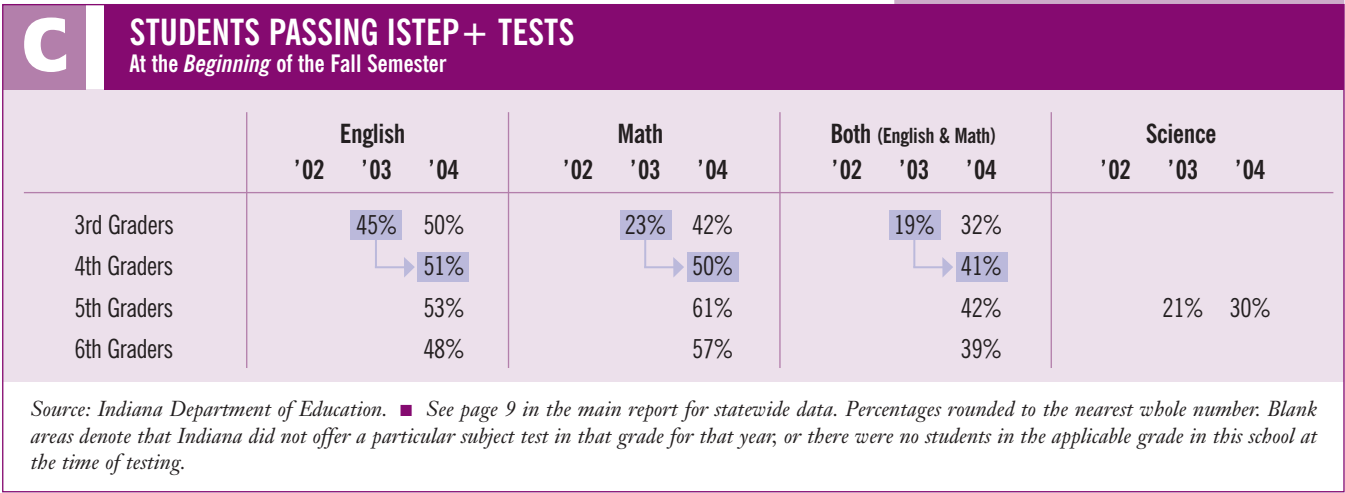
■ **CHART C** displays the percentage of AJB 3rd through 6th graders who received passing scores on ISTEP+ examinations in fall 2004 and, where applicable, the percentage passing in 2003. Though AJB students took the state's ISTEP+ exams in fall 2003, they did so shortly after the school opened at the beginning of the school year. As a result, the school's results on the 2003 state tests reflect students' starting levels

of academic achievement rather than the school's performance.

Moreover, it is not possible to use these results to measure individual students' progress over time because each grade's test results pertain to different students in 2003 versus 2004. However, simple comparisons of the percent passing give an indication of general student performance trends at the school. The arrows in this figure compare the percent passing in a particular grade as it progressed to the next grade (e.g., how

3rd graders in 2003 performed as 4th graders in 2004). For example, 45% of incoming 3rd graders passed the English ISTEP+ in 2003, while 51% passed as 4th graders in 2004. As shown below, pass rates improved for all years and subjects in which comparison data are available. As ISTEP+ continues to be administered in all grades, the Mayor's Office will be able to determine how much progress over time individual students in this school make on these tests over time.

Andrew J. Brown Academy



Adequate Yearly Progress

AJB made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2005, as determined by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). Federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires the IDOE to determine AYP for

each public school in Indiana, including charter schools in operation during the 2003-04 school year. The IDOE determines whether each school makes AYP based on the percentage of students who were enrolled in the school for a full

year that passed the English and mathematics ISTEP+ tests. In addition, each elementary and middle school must raise or maintain high attendance rates. ■ **CHART D** below shows AJB's AYP determinations.

Andrew J. Brown Academy

<div> <div>D</div> <div> ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS As Determined by the Indiana Department of Education </div> </div>				
Overall Determination: Yes	English	Math	Attendance	Participation Rate
All students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Black, not of Hispanic origin	Yes	Yes		Yes
White, not of Hispanic origin				
Free/reduced-price lunch	Yes	Yes		Yes

Source: Indiana Department of Education. ■ AYP determinations are required by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Blank areas denote that the Indiana Department of Education concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in the particular category for this school. The Indiana Department of Education also concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in other subgroups (e.g., Hispanic, Limited English Proficient, or Special Education) for any of the Mayor-sponsored charter schools; thus these categories are not included in this figure. Attendance Rate determination is only made for "All Students," not for subgroups. ■ To meet AYP goals, 95% of eligible students must participate in testing.

ARE STUDENTS MAKING ADEQUATE AND SUBSTANTIAL GAINS OVER TIME?

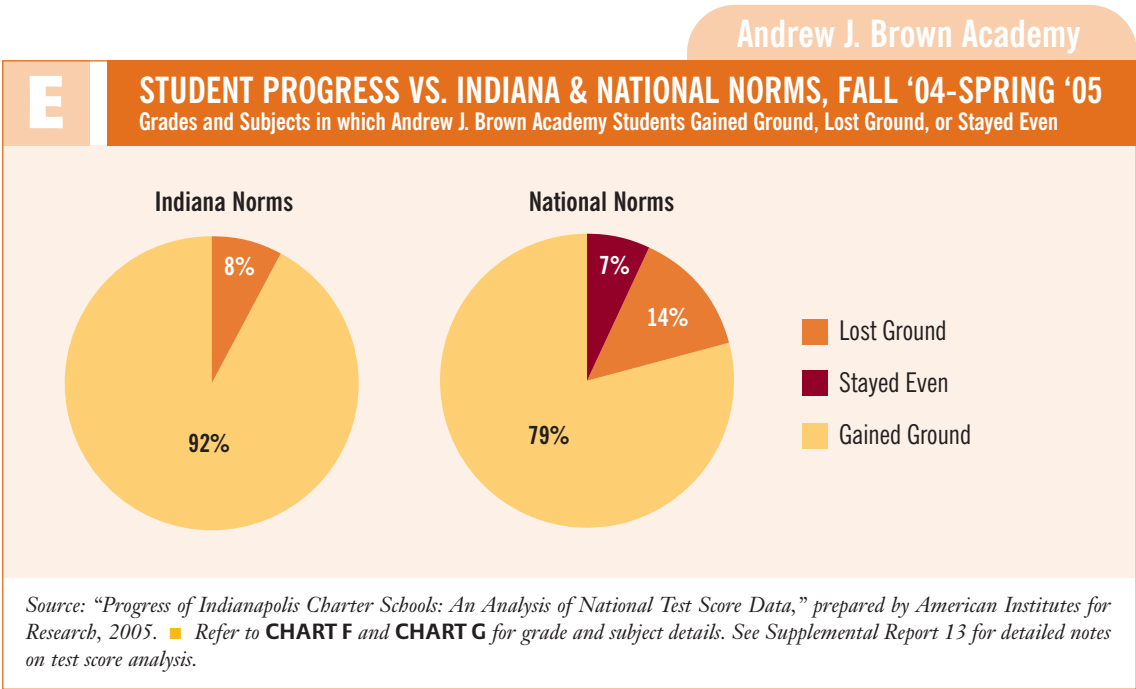
Charter schools administered the highly-regarded Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in reading, math, and language in both the fall and the spring. American Institutes for Research (AIR), a major nonprofit research organization, analyzed the results for the Mayor’s Office to answer two questions about how much students learned over the course of the 2004-05 academic year:

- Did students gain ground, lose ground, or stay even relative to their peers nationally and in Indiana?
- What proportion of students made sufficient progress to reach proficiency over time?

Comparative Gains: How much did Andrew J. Brown Academy students improve relative to their peers?

AIR was able to compare the average gains of students at AJB with those of

students across Indiana (■ CHART F) and the US (■ CHART G). The figures show where AJB students gained ground, lost ground, or stayed even relative to their peers. As the pie charts below show, AJB students gained ground relative to their Indiana peers in eleven out of twelve (92%) grades and subjects (■ CHART E). They gained ground relative to their national peers in eleven out of fourteen (79%) grades and subjects (■ CHART E).



F
ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Andrew J. Brown Academy vs. Indiana Norms (IN), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Andrew J. Brown Academy Gains vs. IN Gains					
Grade/Subject			Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	IN Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	16.8	-			
2nd Grade Reading	15.9	-			
2nd Grade Language	17.5	-			
3rd Grade Math	11.5	10.6	0.9		
3rd Grade Reading	14.8	9.0	5.8		
3rd Grade Language	12.6	8.5	4.1		
4th Grade Math	14.3	8.8	5.5		
4th Grade Reading	13.0	6.8	6.2		
4th Grade Language	15.7	5.8	9.9		
5th Grade Math	12.3	9.0	3.3		
5th Grade Reading	7.3	5.9	1.4		
5th Grade Language	8.6	5.2	3.4		
6th Grade Math	12.1	9.1	3.0		
6th Grade Reading	4.1	5.3			-1.2
6th Grade Language	4.5	4.1	0.4		

How to Read this Figure: The fourth row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 3rd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 3rd grade students at AJB made an average gain of 11.5 points, compared to 10.6 points for the average IN student. These students “gained ground” compared to the average IN student because their average gains were 0.9 points higher.

Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.



ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

Andrew J. Brown Academy vs. National Norms (US), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Andrew J. Brown Academy Gains vs. US Gains					
Grade/Subject	School Gains	US Gains	Gained or Lost Ground		
			Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	16.8	15.7	1.1		
2nd Grade Reading	15.9	14.9	1.0		
2nd Grade Language	17.5	-			
3rd Grade Math	11.5	11.8			-0.3
3rd Grade Reading	14.8	10.4	4.4		
3rd Grade Language	12.6	9.3	3.3		
4th Grade Math	14.3	8.9	5.4		
4th Grade Reading	13.0	7.4	5.6		
4th Grade Language	15.7	6.5	9.2		
5th Grade Math	12.3	8.8	3.5		
5th Grade Reading	7.3	6.3	1.0		
5th Grade Language	8.6	5.8	2.8		
6th Grade Math	12.1	8.1	4.0		
6th Grade Reading	4.1	5.3			-1.2
6th Grade Language	4.5	4.5		0.0	

How to Read this Figure: The first row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 2nd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 2nd grade students at AJB made an average gain of 16.8 points, compared to 15.7 points for the average US student. These students “gained ground” compared to the average US student because their average gains were 1.1 points higher.

Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

Sufficient Gains: What proportion of students is on track to reach proficiency?

AIR projected each AJB student's *future* MAP test score based on the gain he or she achieved between fall 2004 and spring 2005. If the student continued to gain at the same rate, would he or she be

proficient in the subject within two years, and therefore able to pass the ISTEP+ the following fall? If so, he or she made "sufficient gains." This year's standard for "sufficient gains" is considerably higher than in last year's report, in which AIR counted a student's gains as "sufficient" if the student would become proficient by

8th grade – a relatively long time horizon for younger students. This year, the analysis projects out no more than two years for any student. AIR calculated the percentage of students who made sufficient gains in each subject and grade.

■ **CHART H** displays the results.

Andrew J. Brown Academy

H

STUDENTS ACHIEVING SUFFICIENT GAINS

To Become Proficient Within Two Years

	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade
Math	69%	73%	78%	77%	69%
Reading	70%	86%	78%	72%	56%
Language	76%	79%	87%	79%	56%

How to Read this Figure: The first row, as an example, under the 2nd grade column shows 69%. This means that at their current rate of progress, 69% of 2nd graders enrolled at AJB for the 2004-05 school year are expected to be proficient in math in the spring of their 4th grade year, and thus able to pass the ISTEP+ the following fall.

Source: "Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data," prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005.

■ For 6th grade students, "sufficient gains" means sufficient to pass the ISTEP+ in the fall of 8th grade. To determine what score is proficient, NWEA conducted a study in 2003 that found a high correlation between student scores on the MAP and the ISTEP+, allowing the NWEA to pinpoint a MAP score that equates with a passing score on the ISTEP+ in each grade and subject. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

IS THE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVE AND WELL-RUN?

Is the school in sound fiscal health?

The Mayor's Office commissioned an outside accounting firm to review each school's finances. The accounting firm reported that AJB managed its financial practices satisfactorily during the past year, with no significant problems. Supplemental Report 11 contains financial statements and a summary of the school's finances.

The Indiana State Board of Accounts (ISBA) completed an audit of AJB's 2003-04 school year in June 2005. The audit found that AJB and its educational management organization, National Heritage Academies, did not provide all of the documentation requested by the ISBA in order to conduct the audit. For example, the ISBA stated in its report that the school did not comply with the requirement to make all original documentation for the school's accounts (e.g. receipts or cancelled checks) available for the ISBA field examiners to review. In addition, the ISBA found that

the school did not maintain separate accounts for all grant funds received and expended during the 2003-04 school year.

AJB did not provide a response to the ISBA audit report within the ten-day response period following its exit conference with the ISBA field examiner. The official ISBA audit report thus does not include any response from the school to the audit findings. National Heritage Academies, on behalf of the school, submitted a response to the audit findings one month after the exit conference. In addition, representatives of National Heritage Academies met with the ISBA to discuss the audit findings and the response submitted on behalf of the school. Through the written response to the audit findings and the meeting with the ISBA, National Heritage Academies and AJB have demonstrated their commitment to rectify the problems identified in the audit report and to ensure that the school is in compliance with all ISBA regulations going forward.

Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?

The school's attendance rate was 95.4% in 2004-05 (■ **CHART I**). Enrollment in the second year of AJB's operations was close to the school's maximum possible enrollment.

Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?

Governance reviews conducted by the Mayor's Office in 2004-05 found that the AJB Board re-scheduled three of its six meetings and eventually met four times (October, December, March, and June). According to the expert site visit team, a quorum was achieved at all meetings, and both routine and substantive issues were included on the agenda.

The site team noted that the six members of the school's Board have a variety of relevant expertise and characterized the Board as knowledgeable about the school and involved and competent in its oversight. Given its relatively small size, however, the team suggested that the Board consider expanding if it needs access to individuals who have additional areas of expertise.

Andrew J. Brown Academy

ATTENDANCE RATE IN 2004-05 SCHOOL YEAR

	Attendance Rate
Andrew J. Brown Academy	95.4%
Indianapolis Public Schools	94.2%
All Indiana Public Schools	95.9%

Source: Indiana Department of Education website, preliminary figures.

Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?

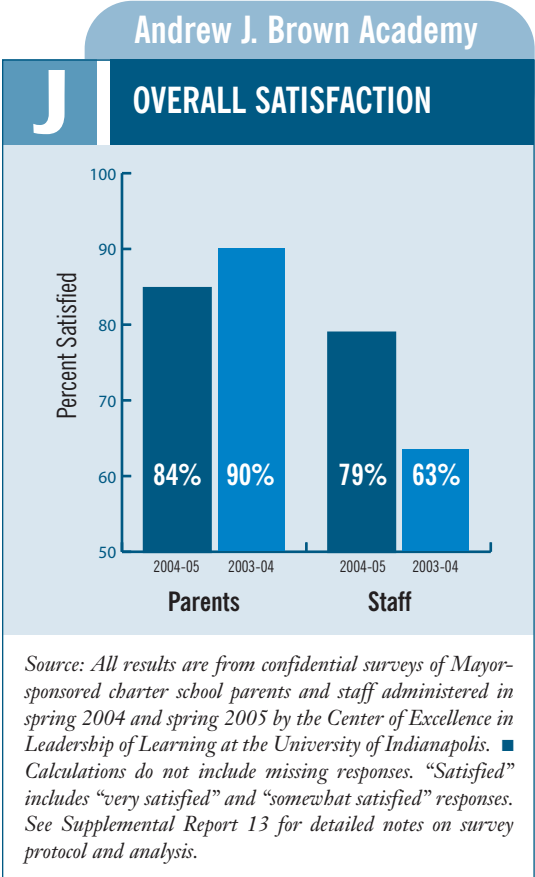
As shown in **CHART J**, 84% of parents surveyed said that overall, they were satisfied with AJB, down from 90% in 2003-04. Most parents (79%) plan to return to the school next year, and 73% indicated they were “extremely likely” or “very likely” to recommend AJB to others (**CHART K**). In comparison, 79% of staff were satisfied overall this year, an increase from 63% the prior year. While 77% of the staff at AJB planned to return to the school next year, a smaller

percentage (57%) said they are likely to recommend the school to others (**CHART K**).

CHART L shows how well parents and staff rated specific features of the school. The top-rated features for both parents and staff are highlighted in blue; the lowest-rated features are highlighted in crimson. The school features most frequently identified as “excellent” or “very good” by both parents and staff were opportunities for parental involvement and school facilities – more than 70% in both cases. By comparison,

parents and staff gave the fewest positive ratings to food service (**CHART L**).

Parents who participated in the expert site team’s focus groups indicated that they were quite satisfied with the school, citing the school’s focus on good behavior and values, the one-on-one attention, and the overall commitment to students. The majority of staff interviewed by the site visit team also reported high levels of satisfaction and indicated that they intended to remain at the school.



Andrew J. Brown Academy

K PARENTS AND STAFF WHO ARE LIKELY TO...

	Parents	Staff
Recommend the school to friends and colleagues	73%	57%
Return to the school next year	79%	77%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Calculations include “extremely likely” and “very likely” responses. Calculations do not include missing responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

Andrew J. Brown Academy


L

PARENTS AND STAFF EVALUATION

Excellent/Very Good Responses of Select Features

	Parents	Staff
Overall quality of education	74%	67%
Quality of teaching/instruction	68%	63%
Curriculum/academic program	68%	60%
Individualized student attention	61%	40%
Access to/use of computers and other technologies	51%	41%
School material and supplies	49%	49%
Classroom management	43%	20%
Student-teacher ratio/class size	41%	23%
Services provided to special needs students ¹	52%	27%
Support services (e.g., counseling, healthcare, inc.)	50%	18%
Opportunities for parental involvement	77%	74%
Communication about student learning/achievement	68%	82%
Communication about meeting the school's mission	59%	57%
Teacher professional development	69%	44%
Faculty/teachers	70%	69%
School administration	69%	59%
School board	55%	57%
School facilities	74%	71%
Food service	31%	15%
Transportation services	32%	29%
Enrollment/admission process	62%	56%
School size	52%	34%
School safety	64%	66%
School location	68%	69%

 Highest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

 Lowest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Individual features with the highest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in blue; features with the lowest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in crimson. "Excellent" and "very good" responses are on a five-point scale (scale also includes "good," "fair," and "poor"). Calculations do not include missing and "don't know" responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis. ■ ¹Special needs students include those for whom English is a second language or who have disabilities, academic difficulties, etc.

Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?

Governance reviews conducted by the Mayor's Office showed that the school is strong in organizational leadership. As discussed below, the school met the necessary reporting requirements in a timely manner, except for the IDOE's second count of Average Daily Membership (ADM).

As noted earlier, the AJB Board of Directors was scheduled to meet every other month during the 2004-05 school

year. The Board must ensure that the public is informed if meetings are cancelled or rescheduled. As observed in 2003-04, the minutes of the school's Board meetings continue to lack details of the discussions and deliberations of the Board. The minutes clearly outline motions and votes taken by the Board, but do not offer detail on the Board's discussion of these action items. As the minutes are a matter of public record, the Board should ensure that the minutes clearly describe the issues discussed at the meetings.

According to the expert site visit team, "all constituents identify the [Principal] as an exemplary, strong instructional leader who is a 'very caring person with all the children.' Teachers note that the Principal is in classrooms every day and is very knowledgeable about teacher issues and needs." The site team added that the Principal made significant progress attracting and retaining appropriately trained and dedicated staff, and developing professional development, assessment and academic programs.

IS THE SCHOOL MEETING ITS OPERATIONS AND ACCESS OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO:

organizational structure and governance obligations; physical plants that are safe and conducive to learning; fair and appropriate pupil enrollment processes; reasonable and safe transportation options available to eligible students; and legal obligations related to access and services to special needs and English as a second language students?

AJB satisfactorily met its obligations in 2004-05 in complying with relevant laws and regulations and in providing access to students across Indianapolis. Neither the Mayor's Office's internal systems nor the expert site visit team indicated any significant concerns related to these obligations.

During the 2004-05 school year, the school satisfactorily maintained the compliance binder, which contains all of the school's governance, management, and organizational documents and is reviewed by the Mayor's Office on a monthly basis. In general, AJB maintained a high level of organization in 2004-05 and met the necessary reporting requirements. In 2004-05, school staff coordinated most compliance and reporting duties with the exception of financial and attendance reporting, which is managed by staff at National Heritage Academies, the school's educational management organization. The school

did have difficulty, however, in meeting the IDOE reporting requirement to submit the second count of ADM on December 1, 2004 in a timely manner.

The expert site visit team commended the school for successfully developing the organizational structure outlined in its charter, with strong school leadership and key positions filled. The team also commended AJB for its well-designed physical plant and the facility's safety features. Classrooms are appropriately sized, and the school includes both a gymnasium and a library. In interviews with the site team, several parents and staff identified a need for a better designed and equipped outdoor space for physical activity.

Regarding pupil enrollment, the site team noted that the school has implemented a lottery system and gives preference to siblings of current students as required by law. Bus transportation is provided to qualified students, but the site team found

some parents were confused about whether their children were eligible for transportation. The team recommended that the leadership at AJB communicate the school's transportation policy more clearly to parents.

According to the site visit team, the school has identified, tested and implemented instructional programs to serve children with special education needs. The majority of teachers reported to the team that they have what they need to work with special needs students, yet only 27% of staff rated services provided to students with special needs as "excellent" or "very good," as did only half of parents surveyed (52%). The Principal noted that AJB relies heavily on the state-wide special education cooperative to identify and test special needs students. The Principal added that obtaining support from the cooperative "takes a long time," and that it provides limited services.

IS THE SCHOOL PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS?

Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?

In interviews with the expert site visit team, stakeholders agreed on the mission of AJB and that the school has made “noticeable” and “considerable” progress in achieving the mission.

As shown in ■ **CHART L**, 59% of parents surveyed and 57% of the school's staff rated communication about the school's mission as “excellent” or “very good.”

Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?

According to the site team, “classroom observations and information provided by leaders, staff, parents, and students indicate that the school is, as intended, providing an overall challenging and effective classical curriculum with an emphasis on basic skills and knowledge of content.” The school makes use of a variety of curriculum materials including Open Court for language arts, Saxon mathematics, materials provided by National Heritage Academies, and supplemental materials developed by teachers. The site team noted that teachers reported satisfaction with the curriculum and materials available to them, and strong support in specific content areas provided by National Heritage Academies.

Based on classroom observations and conversations with teachers, the site team also commended AJB for its high-quality curriculum for language arts and mathematics. A few parents, however, noted concerns about the rigor and depth of the 4th and 5th grade social studies and science curriculum. The expert site visit team suggested that staff review the curriculum used in these subjects to ensure its comprehensiveness and work with parents to help them understand AJB's goals for these subjects.

Additionally, several staff reported that the weekly Bridges to Success remediation and enrichment program is inconsistently implemented across classrooms; the team suggested that the

school consider ways to more effectively plan and implement this program. Finally, technology was identified as an area for potential attention; the site visit team determined that AJB should consider increasing the use of technology resources to support learning, e.g., through on-line tutoring or practice. In the survey of Mayor-sponsored charter schools, 51% of the parents surveyed and 41% of the staff surveyed gave access to computers and other technology “excellent” or “very good” ratings (■ **CHART L**).

Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?

The expert site visit team found that AJB had a strong assessment program. In addition, the majority of teachers interviewed reported that they explicitly and intentionally use the Indiana State Academic Standards to guide their lesson planning.

Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?

The expert site visit team characterized the climate at AJB as “caring, orderly, structured, and focused on learning.” The site team found that classrooms are orderly, that the large majority of students are engaged, and that students appeared to know and largely obey school rules. Staff reported high levels of student cooperation and support for one another.

Students interviewed by the team shared that they both like and feel safe at AJB. In addition, as shown in ■ **CHART L**, two-thirds of the parents and staff surveyed gave “excellent” or “very good” ratings to the school's safety.

Parents also expressed positive feelings in the site visit focus groups about the attention paid to students with special needs; several parents reported that their children had needs that were not previously identified in other schools. When asked about areas for improvement, AJB parents remarked that they would prefer smaller class sizes and

transportation for all students. Parents interviewed by the expert site visit team also noted a lack of involvement by many parents; the team suggested that the school continue its efforts to involve more parents through events organized and sponsored by the parent organization.

In response to the survey, few parents expressed satisfaction with class sizes (41%), transportation (32%) and food services (31%) (■ **CHART L**).

According to the expert site visit team, some teachers reported an interest in professional development opportunities to improve their classroom management processes. Consistent with those findings, only 20% of the staff participating in the Mayor-sponsored charter school survey rated classroom management as “excellent” or “very good” (■ **CHART L**).

The site team also commented that the school's culture “emphasizes personal responsibility and effort,” yet there were opportunities for teachers to incorporate leadership development into the instructional program “to help students develop into caring and responsible citizens.”

Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?

Consistent with the school's mission, the expert site visit team observed classrooms that were focused on learning and practicing basic skills, including writing, speaking, reading and mathematics. The team commended the school for implementing a number of learning strategies that further the school's mission, including: “a longer school day, regular assessments (e.g., weekly Open Court Reading and Saxon Mathematics, NWEA, ISTEP+), classrooms composed of students working at similar levels (e.g., novice, standard, proficient), Bridges to Success each Wednesday during which staff provide targeted assistance to each classroom, three paraprofessionals who rotate to classes each day working with below grade level readers, a Title I reading specialist who works with both teachers and individual students, one

hour each day dedicated to the Waterford on-line reading program for students who are reading two years below grade level, and after school tutoring.”

Parents in the site visit focus groups agreed that their students were receiving high levels of support and were learning a range of essential skills. Parents were also pleased with the school’s practice of grouping students by learning levels, so that students could learn at their appropriate pace.

Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?

About two-thirds (68%) of parents surveyed were satisfied with the school’s communication about student learning, as were 82% of staff. As reported earlier, 59% of parents surveyed and 57% of staff evaluated communication about meeting the school’s mission as “excellent” or “very good.”

During the site visits, parents mentioned that the school communicates extensively through “face-to-face communication at school and during home visits, on-line information about assignments and student grades, daily reading logs, assignment books and periodic progress reports that require parent signatures, and weekly newsletters that contain spelling words.”

Some AJB teachers interviewed by the team reported occasions when they were not adequately informed about relevant and important information. To rectify this situation, the team suggested that the Principal and staff work to improve communication, e.g., by developing a school-wide calendar.

Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?

The site visit team indicated that AJB has sufficient teaching staff, but identified a

need for trained personnel to support the special education population in the future. Teachers in site visit focus groups also noted that students would benefit from an addition of a librarian and a behavior specialist, the latter to support students facing life crises. Paraprofessionals indicated to the site visit team that they do not have written descriptions of their roles and responsibilities, nor a formal evaluation process.

The expert site visit team recognized that the Principal has played critical role in AJB’s success. In order to expand the leadership base, the team recommended that the Principal and Board identify roles and processes that would develop teacher leadership skills, such as establishing grade level leaders, professional learning communities, and coordinators for assessment or curriculum development.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Source: The information below was provided by the school to the Mayor’s Office. It is included here to offer the public a more detailed picture of the school’s programs and activities.

Mission, philosophy, and educational program

AJB focuses on high academic achievement, accountability from all stakeholders, and building good moral character rooted in strong parental involvement. The school provides students with a challenging, back-to-basics program aimed at developing the ability of all students to master fundamental academic skills and, ultimately, to increase academic achievement.

The core elements of the instructional program are the nationally recognized and research-based Open Court reading program and Saxon Math. Teachers use supplemental materials to address

students’ specific academic needs. The school also uses non-traditional classroom assignments and a schedule that allows teachers to teach a class of students who are generally at the same learning level. Referred to as Operation Breakthrough, this program prioritizes getting all students to grade level and above in reading and math. Within each grade, students are assigned to one of three classrooms with others at a similar performance level: “intensive,” for students who are performing below grade level; “standard,” for students who are performing at grade level; and “proficient,” for students who are performing above grade level. Students

who are significantly below grade level spend most of their day on reading/language arts and mathematics until they reach grade level. Class size and composition are designed to be flexible so that students can immediately move to the next performance level if they progress faster than their assigned group.

AJB’s philosophy also has a strong moral focus. The school’s aim is to shape students who believe in and practice positive moral values, and who strive to become intelligent, responsible contributors to society at large. Students are taught specific virtues on a daily basis, both in morning assemblies and during designated times within the school day.

The school believes that high standards of conduct are necessary for students to become academically successful and for teachers to enjoy professional success. Time is spent daily teaching and modeling what it means to treat others with respect.

Academic programs and initiatives

- **Classroom Management.** Teachers at AJB use the Lee Canter Assertive Discipline Program approach to

STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Students from grades three and above are trained to serve as School Ambassadors. Their duties include giving tours to prospective parents and other visitors, greeting and talking with Board members at their meetings, serving as hosts for school activities, and accompanying Parent Ambassadors on recruitment activities. Participation in the program helps students to become more confident in speaking to adults, develop public speaking skills, and achieve a greater understanding of the school's values.

classroom management. Through this program, teachers work with students in an assertive, non-hostile manner that encourages positive behavior. This approach involves stating classroom expectations clearly, continually and persistently emphasizing standards of behavior, and jointly praising good behavior and demonstrating consequences for bad behavior. New teachers receive training in this approach from National Heritage Academies, the school's educational management organization, during an August training program.

- **Reading Quizzes.** The school uses the Accelerated Reader computerized assessment system to monitor students' reading skills. Students choose books to read based on their interests and current reading levels. After a student finishes a book, he or

she takes a quiz on the computer. The results of the quiz are immediately available to the teacher to help identify areas in which the student needs additional help.

- **Morning Assembly.** Every morning, the entire staff and student body come together as a school to recognize the accomplishments of students and to focus on moral education and character building virtues. The school also nurtures a sense of belonging by having students recite the school creed and sing the school song.
- **Waterford Early Reading Program.** The computer-based Waterford program is used in Kindergarten and 1st grade. Waterford is an individually paced curriculum designed to develop early reading skills. It has five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.
- **Write from the Beginning.** Write from the Beginning is a developmental writing program used by students in Kindergarten through 6th grade. The program focuses on early training in skills necessary for successful writing beyond the primary years.
- **Bridges to Success.** Each Wednesday, all special classes (e.g., music, art, and physical education) are cancelled for the day. All special area teachers, a reading specialist, all paraprofessionals, and other support staff spend an hour in each grade providing remediation or extension activities for students based on academic need.
- **Extended School Day.** To better meet students' academic needs in 2004-05, the school's instructional day was extended by one hour, from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Parent involvement

- **Weekly Class- and School-Wide Newsletters.** Each teacher sends home a weekly classroom newsletter. The newsletter includes information on upcoming events, student recognition, and the academic focus

for the week. The Principal also distributes a weekly newsletter that highlights school-wide activities, policies and procedures, and helpful hints for assisting children with their academic growth.

- **Daily Parent/Teacher Contact.** A majority of students who attend AJB are transported by their parents to and from school. This provides teachers and the Principal daily opportunities for contact with families regarding the student's progress. Teachers are also encouraged to keep the lines of communication open by calling parents at home.
- **Parent Committee.** The Parent Committee sponsors an array of activities and services for the school, including volunteering in classrooms and in various academic and non-academic clubs.
- **Access to Grades On-line.** Through an internet-based system called Academy Link, the school offers parents access to their children's grades on the prior week's assignments. They can also view whether the student missed any assignments and correspond with teachers via e-mail.

Supplemental programs and activities

- **After-School Tutoring and Programming.** Teachers volunteer for free after-school tutoring to assist students who need additional one-on-one or small group instruction. The school also offers an after-school program daily from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. for a nominal cost. The program is provided by Great Achievements Extended Care and offers homework assistance, arts and crafts, karate, and cultural activities.
- **Before-School Program.** The school offers a before-school program from 6:00 to 7:30 a.m. for a nominal cost. During this time students are involved in academic and social activities to prepare them for the school day.

- **Choirs.** Thirty students in grades four through six participate in a school choir that rehearses after school. The students sang at several evening performances for the entire school community. In addition, six students are members of the Indianapolis Charter Schools Honor Choir with students from four other local charter schools. This is one of six after-school choirs run by the Indianapolis Children's Choir, which conducts twice-weekly rehearsals at no cost to the school. The Charter Schools Honor Choir performed at various events around the city, including the Indiana Charter School Conference and a Martin Luther King celebration at the Mayor's Office.
- **Excel Club.** Students are recognized for good behavior and academic achievement during weekly all-school assemblies. As a reward, Excel Club students who do not have computers at home were entered into a drawing for a personal computer.
- **Chess and Computer Clubs.** These optional clubs meet regularly after school. The goals of the Chess Club are to build cognitive skills, social skills, and self-esteem. In the Computer Club students learn about computer hardware and software applications.

Community partnerships and donations

- **Community Service Efforts.** Throughout the school year, students collected pennies for the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Students also made Valentine cards for sick children at Riley Hospital for Children.
- **YMCA After-School Program.** As part of a drug prevention effort, the YMCA offers a free eight-week, twice-weekly after-school program on-site for students ages ten to fourteen. In 2004-05, approximately twenty students participated in games and activities emphasizing conflict resolution, social etiquette, and the value of friendship.

- **Early Literacy.** To supplement student learning in the primary grades, AJB received an Early Literacy Grant from the IDOE for \$83,000. The grant was used to provide the Waterford Early Reading Program for grades one and two, and for students working below grade level in grades three and four.

Staffing

- **Regular Satisfaction Surveys.** In addition to an annual survey conducted by the Mayor's Office, National Heritage Academies surveys AJB staff and parents twice yearly to determine their satisfaction with the school. The school's leadership uses survey results to monitor and improve school practices.
- **Teacher Collaboration.** Teachers hold weekly grade-wide meetings to discuss lesson planning, share effective teaching techniques, and discuss ongoing classroom successes and challenges.
- **Teacher Development.** All teaching staff new to AJB attend a weeklong National Heritage Academies teacher-training program in Lansing, Michigan prior to the start of the school year. Staff hired after the start of the school year attend the training prior to the start of the following school year; the staff members hired mid-year also receive on-site training and support when they are hired. Master Teachers from National Heritage Academies visit the school four days each month, teaching model lessons in classrooms and working with individual teachers on effective classroom management and teaching strategies.
- **Using Data to Drive Instruction.** Teachers assess student progress on a weekly basis using Open Court and Saxon Math unit assessments in addition to other standardized tests. Teachers are trained to utilize the data from these assessments to tailor upcoming instruction and determine appropriate remediation and enrichment activities.

School management

AJB is operated by National Heritage Academies, an educational management organization that operates fifty-one schools in five states. National Heritage Academies provides management support to the school in a variety of areas including finance, technology, and

INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE

All students in grade four participated in activities with residents of a local nursing/retirement home as an intergenerational service project. Students wrote letters to the residents, performed a variety show directed by the school's music teacher, and created care packages for the residents. Future activities will include opportunities for students to practice their literacy skills by reading to residents of the home who can no longer read.

curriculum. The school Principal, Thelma L. Wyatt, is the instructional leader and is responsible for day-to-day management of the school. Ms. Wyatt supervises all staff and is responsible for all aspects of on-site programs. National Heritage Academies' Regional Director, David Seamon, is responsible for the school's operations and management.

School governance

The AJB Board of Directors is responsible for the school's fiscal and academic policies, including: establishing recruitment and admission policies; reviewing and approving the annual budget; and monitoring the expenditure of discretionary funds. The Board also reviews reports from the school Principal and National Heritage Academies, and oversees the management contract with National Heritage Academies. Board members include a college professor, an architect, a higher education administrator, and the president of a service organization with ten chapters throughout Indiana.

Facilities

The school is located on the far east side of Indianapolis. The school leases its school building from National Heritage Academies, which financed and oversaw the construction of the facility in 2003. The brand new building has approximately 47,000 square feet and includes 27 large classrooms, a large gymnasium, a media center, a parent room and many conference rooms. The building was constructed to accommodate planned grade level enrollment growth; an unoccupied wing of the school building will open for the older grades as the school expands.

Planned improvements for the upcoming school year

- **Instructional Calendars.** The school is creating grade-level instructional calendars in order to establish a consistent, school-wide system to cover all of the Indiana State Academic Standards. With the use of the calendars, pacing and standards-based teaching will occur on a daily basis.
- **Mentoring Program.** The school will develop a mentoring program for students and is holding discussions with two community organizations about securing funding and recruiting mentors. Through the program, students will meet regularly with adult

mentors from the community who serve as positive role models for the students and help them develop adult relationships and social skills.

- **Teacher Inquiry Groups.** Staff at the school received training in spring 2005 on techniques to create a professional learning community at the school to promote collaboration and communication among all stakeholders within the school. One of these techniques, teacher inquiry groups, will be implemented starting fall 2005. All staff will meet on a regular basis in teacher inquiry groups to study and discuss current best practices to increase student achievement.